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SUBJECT: GUINEAN ARMY QUIETLY CELEBRATES FIFTIETH
ANNIVERSARY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The Guinean Army quietly celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on November 2, contrary to the expectations of the press and various contacts. The GoG announced a force-wide salary increase over national radio, to be implemented in January 2009, but effective November 1. The military also released its much anticipated promotion lists, which did not include any retirements. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Despite much trepidation on the part of the local press and various contacts, the Guinean army's fiftieth anniversary celebration on November 2 was quiet and uneventful. Charge and DATT attended the military parade, as did Prime Minister Ahmed Tidiane Souare, First Lady Henriette Conte, and several chiefs of defense from ECOWAS countries. President Conte did not attend the ceremony, having traveled to Boke to respond to growing civil unrest (septel).

¶3. (SBU) Outfitted in new uniforms, soldiers stood out in the heat on the parade grounds for more than three hours, visibly uncomfortable. At one point, the presiding general announced a series of decorations and then invited the awardees to come up and publicly receive their decorations. The assembled rank and file immediately started grumbling and shouting out "no!" There was some confusion and then after consulting with his colleagues, the general announced that the decorations would be pinned on later at the banquet.

¶4. (U) The GoG did not officially announce a widely anticipated salary increase at the ceremony as expected, but many of the assembled soldiers seemed aware that a pay increase would be forthcoming. The official announcement came later in the evening on November 2 over national radio. The GoG did not specify the total amount of the increase, but stated that the military salary index would be adjusted, noting that the change would be effective November 1, but that payments would not begin until January 2009.

¶5. (U) The military promotion lists, which were also widely anticipated, were publicly read in the camps on November 2 at 16:00. The GoG did not announce any retirements. One officer was promoted to the rank of general while four existing generals were promoted to a higher general rank (the highest possible). There were also a number of other promotions at the lower ranks. Embassy is working to obtain a copy of the promotion list, which was heavily protected by the military before the announcement was made.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) The announcement of an official pay increase seems to have pacified the rank and file soldiers who were reportedly threatening another military mutiny. However, union leaders are planning to meet today to discuss the overall political/economic situation. The military's pay

increase in the face of the GoG's continued failure to pay basic salaries to government workers, let alone implement long promised increases, will likely be a point of contention. The fact that the GoG did not announce any military retirements could sow discontent among younger officers who have been pushing for the removal of senior military leaders. END COMMENT.
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